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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 441st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 29 June 1995, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DE SILVA (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 49/82 OF 15 DECEMBER 1994 (continued)

1. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) recalled that in General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI), the Indian Ocean had been designated for all time as a zone of peace. The Declaration had sought to create a regime that would lead to greater security for the countries of the Indian Ocean area. The current international political environment offered an unparalleled opportunity for the achievement of that goal.

2. His delegation noted with satisfaction the growing consensus in the Committee about the need to work to achieve the goals of peace, security and stability in the region and noted the development of new alternative approaches in that connection. Agreement had been reached that while considering and developing new alternative approaches, it was important to build on areas in which consensus had already been reached. Any new initiative should not detract from the importance of the Committee's work or diffuse the focus of its mandate.

3. In order to fulfil the Committee's mandate, steps should be taken to improve the regional and subregional security environment, based on the following elements: a commitment to the settlement of disputes by peaceful means; strict observance of the principle of sovereign equality, whereby the States of the region must renounce policies of domination and hegemonism; the establishment of regional security arrangements, including measures for conventional arms control and dispute settlement mechanisms; and the denuclearization of the area.

4. Peace could be achieved only by squarely addressing the security issues. In Pakistan's view, the Committee provided the most appropriate forum for pursuing the goals of peace, security and stability in the region, which would lead to the establishment of the zone of peace.

5. The Committee's work could be complemented by the convening of a meeting of the littoral and hinterland States to discuss in detail all the issues involved in the operationalization of the zone of peace. The experience of the previous meeting demonstrated that such a meeting would yield fruitful results.

6. Mr. SURIE (India) said that his delegation shared the collective sense of disappointment that, despite the persistent efforts by the Chairman to hold consultations with the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France, success was still elusive; his delegation requested the Chairman to pursue his efforts to secure the cooperation of the non-participating members of the Security Council and major maritime users and their full participation in the Committee's work, since that was essential for making progress towards the common goal of implementing the 1971 Declaration. It was essential to pursue the dialogue and ensure the participation of those countries in the Committee's work, given the current international climate and the new alternative approaches being worked out by the Committee.

7. India was committed to the principles of the 1971 Declaration, which had a long-term historical perspective. The elimination of foreign military presence from the Indian Ocean region remained a necessary and desirable goal.

8. In its efforts to elaborate new alternative approaches with a view to ensuring peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region, the Committee should continue to focus on attaining the objectives of the 1971 Declaration.

9. India had participated in the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative, put forward by the Government of Mauritius, and supported it. It was also actively participating in the deliberations of the International Forum on the Indian Ocean Region, organized on the initiative of Australia.

10. In the current circumstances, and given the importance of participation in the Committee's work by all the permanent members of the Security Council and also the major maritime users, it was worth considering the question of increasing the intervals between the Committee's sessions. The Chairman could continue his consultations with the principal non-participating countries, especially the non-participating permanent members of the Security Council.

11. Mr. SHARDELOW (Observer for South Africa) said that South Africa was participating for the first time in the Committee's work.

12. The climate in which the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, as well as the Committee's mandate to achieve that goal, had been formulated had changed fundamentally. It was now time for the Committee to seriously consider its future. Such questions should be asked as whether the goals of the Declaration were achievable, whether the Declaration should be amended, whether the mandate should be altered and whether the Committee should continue to exist. A possible option would be for the Committee to meet less frequently in the short term so that consultations on those questions could be held among as wide a group of States as possible.

13. South Africa was fully committed to the principle of establishing a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. Having voluntarily given up its nuclear weapons, it had demonstrated that it was committed to full nuclear disarmament. South Africa was an active participant in the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic, and would host the next meeting of participants in the zone. It was also participating in the work of the group of experts responsible for drafting a treaty on an African nuclear-weapon-free zone.

14. South Africa had participated in the meetings held in Australia and Mauritius and believed that as many States as possible should participate in the Mauritius initiative and that a suitable mechanism should be found to achieve that goal by the time the next meeting was held in India in December 1995. In South Africa's view, those initiatives and meetings should focus on issues of regional socio-economic cooperation, and security issues should be discussed in a separate forum.

15. Although South Africa was not a member of the Committee and was participating in its work as an observer, it was deeply interested in the issues considered by the Committee.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.